

Neff, C.-
Birds of Portland, Conn.

(1888)

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BEQUEST OF

WILLIAM BREWSTER

July 24, 1920.

Portland, Ct., Feb. 15, 1888.

[To be continued next week.]

*Middlesex County
Record, Portland
Conn. Friday
Feb. 24, 1888*

ORNITHOLOGICAL.

55,035.

A LIST OF THE BIRDS OF PORTLAND,
CONN., AND VICINITY.

Written by Mr. Charles Neff, with
Jottings from His Journal.

The following is not a complete list, but is mostly of my own observations with notes from a journal kept for several years:

Robin—one of our common summer residents, commencing to arrive the latter part of February—are mostly seen in flocks about the fields and among the cedars or some time after their arrival in spring. Sometimes a stray one will be seen in winter—commence singing by four o'clock spring mornings—seem to sing the sweetest and loudest—often sing evenings until it is quite dark.

Wood Thrush—a summer resident—commence to arrive about first of May—species is considered to be one of our finest singers—notes sound sweetest when heard in the woods on dark, cloudy, or stormy days.

Hermit Thrush—seen here only during migrations in spring and fall—arrive in spring about the middle of April—numbers of them can usually be found among the hemlocks on Strait Hills—are seldom heard to utter a note while here—appear more common here in fall than during their spring migrations.

Olive Backed Thrush—somewhat resembles the Hermit Thrush—pass through here during migrations.

Wilson's Thrush—summer resident—appears early in May. Willow island has always been a favorite nesting place.

Catbird—common summer resident—breeds here.

Brown Thrush—summer resident—largest species of thrush found here—fine singer—song can be heard from a long distance during still mornings in May.

Bluebird—common and well known summer resident—arrives early in spring. It is a welcome sound to hear their notes on a warm day early in the season when the ground is covered with snow. When first heard they are generally flying over high in the air—commence nesting early and raise two or three broods during the season.

Ruby Crowned Kinglet—seen here only during migrations—generally found among the cedars—has a lively chattering song—one of the finest I have ever heard—are a tame and unsuspicious species.

Golden Crowned Kinglet—winter resident, commencing to appear on the approach of cold weather—found among the cedar thickets all winter. Associated with the chickadees and nuthatches.

Blue Gray Gnatcatcher—rare. A specimen was taken here May 11, 1883, and is now in the possession of J. W. Lord.

Black Capped Titmouse or Chickadee—well known bird, found here throughout the year. During summer they retire to the woods where they breed in holes in trees. In the fall when cold weather approaches appear in small flocks about our houses.

White Bellied Nuthatch—found here throughout the year. It is seldom that more than two or three are seen together but I once saw a flock of eleven.

Red Bellied Nuthatch—rare species about here—only seen in winter. I have a specimen taken among the hemlocks on Strait Hills, Jan. 23, 1875.

Brown Creeper—not uncommon here in winter—frequently seen running about on the maple trees through Main street. I once heard one singing one pleasant morning in December—has a very sweet wild song.

House Wren—common summer resident—arrives about the first of May—breeds here.

Winter Wren—sometimes seen here in fall and winter months. I once heard one singing near Welwyn—was one of the finest bird songs I have ever heard.

Long-billed Marsh Wren—common species about the Little river meadows during summer. Their curious nests are built on the bushes and among the sweet flags and meadow grass.

Short-billed Marsh Wrens—rare—nests containing eggs have been found on the Little River meadows.

Great Carolina Wren—I have a specimen in my cabinet taken at Collins Hill, March 2, 1883, the only one of this species ever taken here. Is a southern species and rarely seen in New England.

Horned Lark or Shore Lark—rare species here, two were seen and one taken here on March 22, 1875, which is now in my collection.

Titlark or Pafit—found here only during migrations in spring and fall—sometimes seen in large flocks about the Little River meadows. They fly in loose scattering flocks.

Black and White Creeper—summer resident—arrives early in May—often seen running about the trees in the woods similar to the nuthatches.

Blue Yellow-backed Warbler—summer resident—sometimes quite common during spring migrations. Nests are built in the long bunches of moss that hang from the trees in certain sections in the eastern part of the town and are quite a curiosity.

Blue Golden-winged Warbler—rare—have seen but three specimens—appear about the middle of May with other species of warblers that pass through here during spring migrations.

Nashville Warbler—seen only during migrations—pass through here about the middle of May—stay but a short time.

Yellow Warbler or Summer Yellow bird—common summer resident—breed here—Willow island is a favorite place for them.

Black-throated Green Warbler—common during their migrations—some probably remain and breed here as I have seen and heard them singing on Masomsie hills in the summer.

Black throated blue warbler seen here only during migrations—arriving about the middle of May and staying but a few days.

Yellow-rumped Warbler—very common species. During migrations in spring and fall—more numerous in fall I have sometimes seen them in flocks in winter among cedar thickets. Are

quite an active and restless species, moving from place to place, uttering a sharp “chip.”

Blackburnian Warbler—seen here only during migrations and then in small numbers—one of the handsomest of the spring warblers.

Black Poll Warbler—the last species of warbler that passes through here in spring when they appear, most of the other species have passed farther to the north.

Bay Breasted Warbler—seen here only during migrations—picking among opening buds—seen in small numbers.

Chestnut Sided Warbler—common during migrations—a summer resident—breed here.

Black and Yellow Warbler or Magnolia Warbler—handsome species—seen only during migrations.

Cape May Warbler—a few specimens have been taken here and are now in the possession of Mr. J. H. Sage.

Prairie Warbler—summer resident—a few of their nests have been found about this vicinity.

Red Poll Warbler—earliest species of warbler to arrive in spring sometimes appearing before the snow has all disappeared—are usually found about swampy localities.

Pine Creeping Warbler—few seen during migrations—have heard them singing among the pines at Pine swamp, Cromwell—notes resemble those of a field sparrow.

Middlesex County Record

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY

—BY—

E. F. BIGELOW, Editor and Publisher,

PORTLAND, CONN.

FRIDAY EVENING, MAR. 2, 1888.

CHARLES NEFF.

Portland, Ct., Feb. 29, 1888.

[To be continued next week.]

A LIST OF THE BIRDS OF PORTLAND, CONN., AND VICINITY.

Written by Mr. Charles Neff, with Jottings from His Journal.

II.

Golden Crowned Thrush or Oven Bird—common summer resident—loud notes are generally the first heard on entering a piece of woods—build a

curious roofed nest. I once saw a nest containing two of their own eggs and three cow buntings.

Water Thrush—I have a specimen taken on Masonsic brook—not a common species here.

Meriland Yellow Throated Warbler—common summer resident—breeds about swampy localities.

Yellow Breasted Chat—summer resident—becoming more common every year. Connecticut is said to be about their northern limit. Were but a few pairs of them in town a few years ago—imitates the notes of several species of birds so well as to easily deceive a person and at the same time keepingso well concealed that but a glimpse of them can be had—are found about swampy localities, building their nests in bushes.

Canada Warbler—probably breed through the wild rocky section in the eastern part of the town—appear with the other species of warblers during migrations.

Redstart Warbler—common summer resident usually found in the woods—are lively in their motions flitting from tree to tree spreading their tail and dropping their wings. When in adult plumage are a handsome bird.

Scarlet Tanager or Red bird—summer resident—usually found in the woods—build a loose nest of black roots usually on oak trees. Adult male is of a bright scarlet with black wings.

Barn Swallow—common summer resident nesting inside of barns. I once saw a large flock of them on the ground in the meadows in spring so exhausted from their long flight that they could be approached quite easily.

White Bellied Swallow—is the earliest species of swallow to appear here in spring—are generally found in the vicinity of water—breed here, laying the eggs in holes in trees about the meadows.

Cliff or Eave Swallow—summer resident—building their gourd-shaped nests under the eaves of barns.

Bank Swallows—common summer resident—breeding in colonies in holes dug in the sandy banks along the river shore. Large numbers of them nest in the banks about the Portland quarries.

Purple Martin—summer resident—nest in bird boxes.

Cedar Bird Waxwing—summer resident—sometimes seen in large flocks

during winter and spring months—has no song—plumage very fine, the long feathers of their wings are tipped with a red wax looking substance.

Red Eyed Vireo—common summer resident—builds a neatly finished hanging nest which is suspended from the branches of low trees or bushes in the woods—song of this species will usually be the first heard on entering a piece of woods in summer.

Warbling Vireo—common summer resident, has a pretty warbling song.

Yellow Throated Vireo—summer resident, builds a handsome lichen covered hanging nest.

Solitary Vireo—probably rare—one specimen taken here.

White Eyed Vireo—summer resident builds a hanging nest quite near the ground in swampy situations.

Great Northern Shrike or Butcher Bird—winter visitor from the north—preys on small birds and mice which they pin on thorns among the bushes—have seen them several times in pursuit of gold-finches and red polls—many of the imported English sparrows have been killed by them.

Pine Grosbeak—an irregular winter visitor from the north—during the severe cold winter of 1874-75 they were here in large numbers among the cedar thickets and maples through Main street—they attracted the attention of almost everybody—most of them are in the gray or immature plumage while here, but occasionally a bright red one will be seen among them—have a very sweet plaintive note.

Purple Finch—some seasons they are quite common here—appear in large flocks during the winter and spring months among cedars—few breed here—have a beautiful warbling song.

White Winged Crossbill—irregular northern winter visitor—several were seen among the hemlocks on Strait hills during the cold winter of 1874-5, feeding on the seeds of hemlock cones—bill is curiously shaped and looks as if deformed—none have been seen here since that winter.

Red Crossbill—seldom seen here—winter visitor.

Red Poll Linnet—northern winter visitor—appearing in large flocks, much more numerous some winters than others. Note is similar to the goldfinch note. Males, when in good plumage, have rosy pink breasts.

Pine Finch—fall and winter visitor—sometimes seen associated with the goldfinches and red polls—may be more common here than is supposed—resemble a goldfinch so much that it is not easy to distinguish them in a flock.

Yellowbird or Goldfinch—found here throughout the year—common species—seen in flocks during the winter months—latest breeding bird in summer—commence nesting near the middle of July.

Arctic or White Winged Snow Bunting—appear in flocks during cold winters. I have seen them in immense flocks on the Cromwell meadows, just before heavy falls of snow. If the winter be mild but few or none will be seen here. This species is said to be common the farthest north the Arctic expeditions have yet been. They are a restless species while here staying but a short time in a place.

Lapland Longspur—rare—a few were taken here in traps during the cold winter of 1874-5.

Savannah Sparrow—common summer resident—usually found in old barren fields or pastures—have a very week song.

Bay Winged Bunting—common summer resident—nesting in old barren fields or pastures.

Yellow Winged Sparrow—probably a common summer resident but not often noticed.

Swamp Sparrow—summer resident nesting about swamps.

Song Sparrow—common well known bird—very abundant—arrives early in spring—full of song—raise two or three broods during the summer. I once found a nest containing young birds as late as September 9—sometimes seen in winter.

Slate Colored Snowbird—common winter visitor—often found associated with the tree or Canada sparrow. I have found them frozen to death after severe cold weather in winter. I once saw a large flock containing hundreds, on Hall hill the day before a heavy snow storm. In bright sunny days in spring before the snow has all disappeared—are often heard singing very sweetly about the swamps.

Tree Sparrow—common winter resident—from the north—seen in small flocks everywhere—return in spring about the time the other varieties of sparrows begin to arrive from the South.

Chipping sparrow—common well known summer resident—seen about our houses. I have several times heard them singing in the night. An albine was taken here a few years ago, it was mated and was seen for several days gathering material for a nest.

Field sparrow—another very common summer resident, nesting in briers and sweet fern bushes about the fields.

White Throated Sparrow or Peabody Bird—one of the most beautiful of sparrows—seen here only during spring and fall migrations.

Imported English Sparrow—a species that people are trying to exterminate in many localities—are now a common species about town—several broods are raised during the year—are a pugnacious species and fight and drive away our native birds.

Fox Sparrow—seen here only during spring and fall migrations—are then quite abundant among the cedars and along the outskirts of woods—before leaving in spring are often heard singing—have a very pretty warbling song—is the largest species of sparrow found here.

Middlesex County Record

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY

—BY—

E. F. BIGELOW, Editor and Publisher,

PORTLAND, CONN.

FRIDAY EVENING, MAR. 9, 1888.

ORNITHOLOGICAL.

A LIST OF THE BIRDS OF PORTLAND, CONN., AND VICINITY.

Written by Mr. Charles Neff, with Jottings from His Journal.

III.

Rose Breasted Grosbeak—summer resident—adult male very handsome—look finely when on the wing, under side of wings a lovely pink—do not appear to be a common species here. A few pair breed on Willow island every year. Said to have been almost unknown here thirty or forty years ago.

Indigo Bird—summer resident—breed here. Sing through the hottest days of summer when other birds are still.

Chewink—summer resident. Mr. J. H. Sage has a specimen taken here

Jan. 22, 1876. A very unusual thing to see them here in winter.

Bobolink—common summer visitor, noisy jingling song, familiar to everybody.

Cow Bunting—common summer resident—builds no nest but deposits eggs in nests of other species. Summer warbler is a great sufferer from them and sometimes build one or two extra nests on top of the first to cover the Buntings eggs.

Red-winged Blackbird—common well known species. Arrives early in March—breeds abundantly in swamps. A pleasant sight to see the first flocks appearing in spring. Males appear several days earlier than the females. I once found one of their nests quite well up on a tree. Nests are usually placed in bogs or low bushes. Are sometimes seen in immense flocks in the fall of the year. An albino or white blackbird was seen flying about with a flock in the meadows for several days, one fall a few years ago.

Meadow Lark—common resident—breed here—sometimes seen in small flocks in winter in the fields picking on bare spots of ground where the snow has melted.

Orchard Oriole—summer visitor—nests usually built in orchards, and are curiously woven together with long wiry grass. Male is three years in attaining its perfect plumage. Connecticut is said to be about as far north as they migrate.

Baltimore Oriole or Hang Nest—common summer resident—their purse shaped nests are seen hanging among the maples all along the Main street. If different colored bits of yarn are left where they can get them while they are building their nests they will weave them into it, making a nest of many colors.

Rusty Grackle—abundant during migrations, particularly in fall. Breed farther to north. Large flocks can generally be found about the Little river meadows in fall. Plumage is of a rust color. I once saw one as late as Dec. 9 at the Sand hill swamp one cold frosty morning.

Crow Blackbird—common summer resident—nesting among hemlock and spruce trees.

Crow—found here throughout the year. Sometimes found in immense

flocks during the fall and winter months. I once saw a flock in fall near Sellow's woods containing thousands all cawing loudly. One spring a few years ago the hemlocks about Cox's mill were full of them nights. They all flew off to the westward mornings and returning about nightfall to roost.

Blue Jay—found here throughout the year. A well known species.

Kingbird—common summer resident—quite a pugnacious species—are often seen in pursuit of crows. I once saw five of them in pursuit of one crow, at another time I saw one pursue a bank swallow and strike it lifeless to the ground.

Great Crested Flycatcher—summer resident—is said to have been almost unknown here thirty or forty years ago, is now not uncommon. Nest in holes in trees, a snake skin is usually found woven in their nests. Eggs oddly marked and very handsome.

Pewee Flycatcher or Phebe—arrives early in March—notes, "phe-be," well known to everybody—a cheerful spring sound. I have found their handsome mossy nests among the granite ledges on Masomsic and thus situated in such a wild rocky locality with the bird sitting on the nest so tame and unsuspecting it was a sight one would not forget.

Least Fly-catcher—common summer resident—small and dull plumaged species.

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY

—BY—

E. F. BIGELOW, Editor and Publisher

PORTLAND, CONN.

FRIDAY EVENING, MAR. 16, 1888.

ORNITHOLOGICAL.

A LIST OF THE BIRDS OF PORTLAND,
CONN., AND VICINITY.

Written by Mr. Charles Neff, with
Jottings from His Journal.

IV.

Great Horned Owl—resident throughout the year—but seldom seen, they breed in the wild rocky section in the eastern part of the town. Eggs are laid as early as the 22nd of February.

Mottled Owl—common species—resident throughout the year, a nocturnal species—I have found parts of flying squirrels, robins, bluejays and other species of birds in their nests which are in holes of trees. Mournful notes of this species of owls are sometimes heard evenings in fall.

Long Eared Owl—sometimes seen here during the fall and winter months.

Short Eared Owl—sometimes seen here on the approach of cold weather.

Barred Owl—few specimens of this species are taken here nearly every fall. Appear to be much more common some years than others.

Snowy or Arctic White Owl—this species is an irregular winter visitor here. One was shot at the Cromwell quarries a few years ago. I have a fine specimen taken here in the meadows, November, 20, 1885, it was in fine plumage and measured four and a half feet across the wings. Their flight is similar to that of hawks.

Arcadian Owl—few specimens of this owl have been taken here during the fall and winter months. Are the smallest species of owl found here.

Wood Pewee—summer resident—build a handsome nest, covering the outside with lichens so as much to resemble the limb it is built upon. Nest resembles a humming bird's, but is of larger size. Eggs are also very pretty.

Whipporwill—summer resident—nocturnal species—eggs are laid on the leaves on high dry situations in the

woods. No nest is made. I once saw a whipporwill so tame as to allow herself to be lifted from her eggs with a walking stick. They can be approached easily in the daytime and fly but a short distance on being disturbed.

Night Hawk—summer resident. I have seen them several times sitting on trees and fences. Always sit lengthwise of the limb or rail. Eggs are laid on the ground near or on rocks in barren rocky pastures. No nest is made. They prefer a lot where there are no cattle, their eggs are handsomely marked. Night hawks are sometimes seen in large flocks during fall migrations.

Chimney Swallow—common summer resident, nesting in chimneys. In the fall, 1886, hundreds of them could be seen going into a chimney at the Russell place. For several nights they swarmed about the chimney like a swarm of bees before going in.

Ruby-Throated Humming Bird—well known—only species of hummer found here—build a beautiful mossy nest which can scarcely be distinguished from a knot on the limb, two eggs are their complement.

Belted Kingfisher—found during summer about the river or along brooks—eggs are laid in holes dug in the sandy banks. I have seen this species here in fall after the river has frozen over.

Black-billed Cuckoo—summer resident—builds a loose nest of sticks scarcely enough to hold the eggs.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo—summer resident, nests similar to the yellow bill. usually arrive late in spring.

Hairy Woodpecker—resident throughout the year, but not common, breed in holes in trees. Holes they dig in the side of the tree are as round and true as an augur would bore.

Downy Woodpecker—common resident throughout the year.

Yellow-bellied Woodpecker—rare. I once took a good specimen on Fir Neck, Little river.

Red-headed Woodpecker—this species is said to have been common here about forty years ago, but they disappeared and but an occasional one has been seen for many years until the fall of 1881 when there was a flight of them. They appeared here in considerable numbers and could be seen and

heard everywhere in the woods and meadows. I saw eleven of them in a piece of woods on Fir Neck, Cromwell, among the oak trees, saw several with acorns in their bills. Notes resembles that of a tree frog. Several wintered here and bred here the following summer, but they have disappeared again and one is rarely seen here now.

Golden Winged Woodpecker—they are the most abundant species of woodpecker in this vicinity, although a migratory species, they are sometimes seen here in winter. I have sometimes started them from holes in trees in cold winter days. They probably spend the nights in them. Lay beautiful pearly eggs so transparent that the yolks can be seen through the shell.

Marsh Hawk—a few are generally seen about the Little river meadows during fall months. Nest built on the ground.

Sharp Shinned Hawk—summer resident—breed here. I once saw one in pursuit of a robin that was screaming loudly. They both almost brushed me as they flew by, and dove into a clump of chestnut sprouts where the hawk killed the robin. On another occasion I saw one of these hawks dive suddenly among a flock of robins scattering them in all directions.

Cooper Hawk—summer resident. Nests are found about town nearly every year.

Sparrow Hawk—more often seen during spring and fall migrations—sometimes breed here, nesting in holes in trees. I once found crickets, beetles and caterpillars in the crop of one shot on the second of April.

Red Tailed Hawk—breed here—two and sometimes three is complement of eggs.

Fish Hawk—sometimes seen flying about the river, usually during spring freshets.

Red Shouldered Hawk—resident throughout year—breed here. One was seen to kill a crow one cold day late in the fall on Wangunk meadows. On being shot at it dropped the crow which was still warm when picked up.

Broad Winged Hawk—but little known—nests with eggs have been found here.

Bald Eagle—sometimes seen here. One was shot at Paccusett pond several years ago.

Wild Pigeon—common bird here several years ago but very few appear here now. Few small flocks—sometimes seen in fall. Nests have been found on the Masomsic hills.

Carolina Dove—summer resident—breed here, but do not appear to be a common species.

Ruffed Grouse or Partridge—nest on the ground in the woods laying from eight to fifteen eggs.

Quail—not migratory—lay from twelve to fifteen eggs.

Kildeer Plover—were not uncommon here several years ago, and bred here about old fields. But few are seen here now.

Ring Neck Plover—sometimes seen about the river during spring and fall migrations.

Red Phalarope—I have a specimen in my cabinet taken in the freshet water on the meadows. When first seen was swimming on the water as gracefully as a duck, a rare species seldom found in this vicinity.

Woodcock—arrives early in spring, nesting in swampy situations as early as the middle of April. I once saw a woodcock flushed in a swamp fly away with a young one in its claws. I have also seen them when flushed alight on a rail fence.

Wilson's Snipe—found here during spring and fall migrations. Nest containing eggs was found here May 13th, 1874. Eggs were fully identified. This is the only time this species has been known to breed in this vicinity.

Least Sandpiper—found about the meadows and river shore during migrations.

Greater Yellow Legs—sometimes seen about the river during migrations.

Lesser Yellow Legs—seen about the river and meadows during migrations.

Spotted Sandpiper, Peet Weet—common summer resident—usually found about the river shores—nests are a mere hollow in the sand, lined with a few straws. Eggs are top shaped and very large for the size of the bird.

Great Blue Heron—occasionally seen here. I once saw a pair flying about the Little river meadows. A fine specimen was shot in fall 1885 flying over near Covell's woods.

Green Heron—summer resident. Nests are composed entirely of sticks and are placed on bushes in swampy situations.

Night Heron—few are generally seen about meadows in spring and fall. I once visited a grove at Rocky Hill where a colony of them were breeding. On nearly every tree there were from four to six nests, composed entirely of sticks and containing from two to four eggs. On being disturbed the birds would fly from their nests by dozens making a loud squawking noise.

Bittern Stake Driver—few are usually seen about Little river during fall months.

Least Bittern—summer resident but seldom seen and are not generally known. Several pair breed on Little river meadows.

Virginia Rail—summer resident—are but seldom seen in summer keeping well concealed in the long meadow grass—breed here.

Carolina Rail—probably a common summer resident. They are but seldom seen except in fall. Are then numerous among the wild oats along the shores of Little river and many of them are shot—breed on the meadows.

Coot Mud Hen—usually seen in small flocks among the wild oats about Little river in fall—do not breed here.

Canada or Wild Goose—seen in flocks flying over during migrations in spring and fall.

Black Duck—seen during migrations.

Green Winged Teal—seen only during migrations.

Blue Winged Teal—not uncommon some seasons during migrations.

Wood Duck—seen during migrations—probably breed about this vicinity—breed in hollow trees. This is a very handsome species of duck.

Red Breasted Merganser—seen in flocks about the river in spring and fall. Have seen them in winter about the glades in the river.

Hooded Merganser—sometimes seen during migrations.

Double Crested Cormorant—a fine specimen of this species was shot on the Connecticut river near Willow island, October 29, 1875, and was once in my possession. This is a very rare species in this vicinity and was probably a straggler from the sea coast.

Richardson's Jaeger—a specimen of this species was killed on the Connecticut river in the fall of 1875, and was given to me. A rare species here, a straggler from the coast.

Bonapartes Gull—are sometimes seen about the river and a few have been taken.

Herring Gull—several are usually seen flying about the river during spring and fall months. I saw some flying up the Connecticut river Feb. 5, 1883 when the river was covered with a thick layer of ice. Are a large species of gull measuring about four and one half feet across the wings.

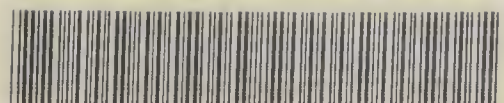
Loon or Great Northern Diver—have been seen here on the river. I once saw one on East Hampton pond while fishing.

Horned Grebe—seen about the river during migrations—most common in fall—are a difficult bird to shoot as they dive so quickly.

Sea Dove or Dovekie—a straggler in this vicinity from the sea coast—A few have been taken here after severe storms.



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